Work-Related Cancers

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM?

- Each year 20,000 cancer deaths in the United States are attributable to occupational exposure to carcinogenic substances and chemicals and to sources of ionizing radiation.
- Millions of U.S. workers are exposed to substances that have been shown to be carcinogenic in animal studies.
- Of chemicals used in commerce, <2% have been tested for carcinogenicity.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

CDC conducts and funds research and public health activities to prevent and reduce the incidence of occupational-associated cancers. Accomplishments include:

- Publication of studies and risk assessments leading to widespread recognition of the hazards of asbestos, benzene, and radon;
- Establishment of the scientific basis and protection strategies used under U.S. occupational health standards to control workplace exposures to asbestos, benzene, and radon;
- Establishment of the scientific basis for compensating U.S. uranium miners under the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act;
- Participation in the nomination and review process for adding to the National Toxicology Program's 10th Report on Carcinogens (2002) 13 substances or exposures occurring in the workplace that are classified as "known" or "reasonably anticipated" to be human carcinogens.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

CDC research programs are focused on issues of current public health concern (e.g., occupational causes of breast cancer among women and the biological mechanisms underlying occupational cancer).

- In partnership with other agencies in the National Toxicology Program, CDC researchers continue to evaluate the scientific evidence to identify carcinogens and to develop priorities for testing potential occupational carcinogens. Specifically, testing of complex mixtures or exposures in the workplace is a priority; abrasive blasting materials, welding fumes, and metal working fluids are being targeted for such testing.
- CDC is collaborating with the National Cancer Institute and other organizations to develop improved occupational cancer research methods by using advances in the field of genetics and integrating human, animal, and mechanistic cancer research findings.
- CDC also is initiating a new National Exposures at Work Survey, which will provide data on current workplace exposures to potential carcinogens.

For additional information on this and other CDC programs, visit www.cdc.gov/programs. *February 2003*